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MARCH 1987

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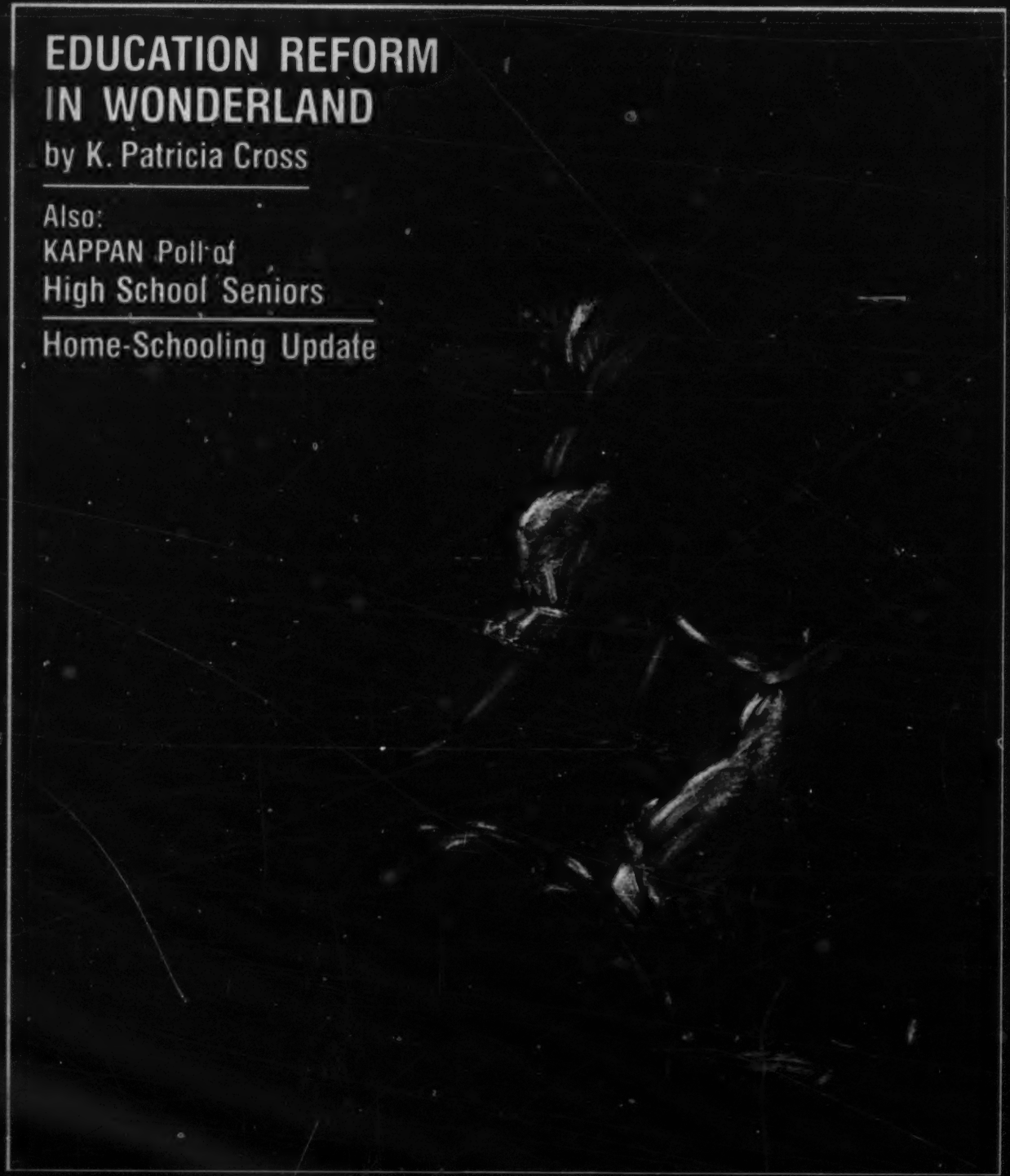
EDUCATION REFORM IN WONDERLAND

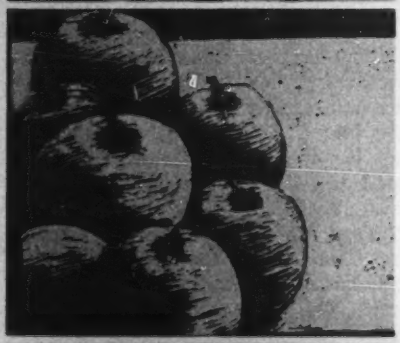
by K. Patricia Cross

Also:

KAPPAN Poll of High School Seniors

Home-Schooling Update





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High School Seniors React To Their Teachers And Their Schools

For the most part, seniors like school, give their own schools high ratings, and view their teachers as knowledgeable and competent. Mr. Clark finds strong foundations on which reform can be built.

BY DAVID L. CLARK

HIGH SCHOOL seniors in the United States do not express alarm over the schools they attend or the teachers with whom they work. By and large, they like school, give their schools high ratings, and view their teachers as both knowledgeable and competent.

A surprising number of U.S. high school seniors report that they would like to become teachers. They worry about such matters as substance abuse, disciplinary infractions in school, and the way their schools handle discipline. They want to be more involved in discussing school problems and establishing and enforcing rules of conduct. Some of their observations confirm the results of various polls of adults; e.g., "disruptive student behavior is a major school problem." But others are not at all like adult views; e.g., "teachers' knowledge of subject matter is no problem" in classroom instruction.

In the spring of 1986 Phi Delta Kappa and the Center for Survey Research at Indiana University surveyed 1,712 high school seniors in 421 high schools across the country.[1] The data and discussion that follow are based on that survey.[2]

DAVID L. CLARK (Indiana University Chapter) is the Parrish Professor of Education in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville. *A copy of the full 96-page research report on which this article is based can be obtained by writing Stanley Elam, Poll Coordinator, Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402. The cost is $15, including postage. Make checks payable to Phi Delta Kappa.*

TEACHERS

Grading teachers. If you are looking for a problem that students see in U.S. high schools, don't look at their teachers. Asked to assign grades to their teachers, 26% of high school seniors gave their teachers an A and 48% gave them a B. Only one in 20 assigned a grade of D or F.

There are systematic differences in student grading of teachers by type of school[3] and by the socioeconomic status of the student.[4] Students in private schools rate their teachers more highly than students attending public schools. Forty-one percent of private school students assigned their teachers an A, while only 24% of public school students did so. Thirty percent of those in the highest socioeconomic group gave their teachers an A, while only 23% of those in the lowest socioeconomic group did so.

Becoming a teacher. If students are favorably disposed toward their teachers, why don't more of them want to become teachers? In fact, many of them do. Twenty-two percent of the seniors surveyed said that they would like to become teachers. This is in contrast to the 6.2% of entering college freshmen who declared an interest in teaching.[5] Twenty-two percent is almost exactly the percentage of the college graduating class that the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy has stated will be required to meet the need for teach-

A surprising number of U.S. high school seniors report that they would like to become teachers.

ers for the early 1990s. Of course, saying that they would "like to become" teachers is different from declaring an interest in education as an undergraduate major.

The positive news, however, is the remarkably large group of high school seniors that is favorably disposed toward teaching. Those who responded positively said that they did so because they liked helping or working with others (32.5%). Those who responded negatively commented on teachers' low salaries (28%) and the problems and frustrations faced by teachers (24%). Only 3% cited the lack of status and recognition accorded to teachers as a reason why they would not like to become teachers. This often-cited disincentive to pursue a career in teaching apparently goes unrecognized until later in the process of career choice.

An interest in teaching is more frequent among seniors in public schools (23%) than among their counterparts in private schools (17%), and more frequent among young women (27%) than young men (17%). The poll found no significant difference by socioeconomic status or race. There is a positive relationship between grades and desire to become a teacher. Table 1 shows 1) that the pool of interested young women has not dried up, 2) that high school students from minority groups are still interested in teaching, and 3) that high school students who would like to become teachers are not the academically least able students.

Teacher characteristics. What characteristics do students feel are important in teachers? The students surveyed said that to "help students in class" teachers need to be understanding, knowledgeable, and fair. Asked how many of their teachers exhibited such characteristics, the students rated their teachers highest in knowledgeability and lower on fairness and understanding. Table 2 shows that students hold the following provocative perceptions of teachers:

- Teachers are more demanding and strict than they need to be.
- Teachers are rated low on both being interesting and being creative. A majority of respondents found few or none of their teachers exhibiting such characteristics. The students felt that being interesting is more important for teachers than being creative.
- Students do not give teachers low ratings on their knowledge of content or on their level of competence, though such characteristics are being called into question by current reform studies.

Reactions to some teacher characteristics varied substantially by the socioeconomic status of the students. Students from a low socioeconomic background felt that, in order to be helpful to students, teachers needed to be friendlier, more understanding, and stricter. They placed correspondingly less emphasis on teachers' being interesting, fair, knowledgeable, and competent. In practice, seniors from low socioeconomic backgrounds found teachers to be less friendly, less knowledgeable, and less competent than did students from upper socioeconomic groups. These data are consistent with the higher grades awarded to teachers by students in the upper socioeconomic groups.

Teacher behaviors. The students were presented with eight teaching behaviors that are sometimes said to create problems. They were asked to indicate whether such problems occurred in their school. The major concern of students was easy to identify. Eighty-one percent of the students said that sometimes (48%) or frequently (33%), "Teachers give special attention to favorite students." No other item commanded a re-

TABLE 1.
Percent of High School Seniors Who Would Like to Become Teachers

Student Category	Yes %	No %
Public school students	23.0	77.0
Nonpublic school students	17.1	82.9
Male	17.0	83.0
Female	27.2	72.8
Black	26.4	73.6
Hispanic	30.8	69.2
White	21.8	78.2
Average grade of student		
A/A–	22.6	77.4
B+/B/B–	24.1	75.9
C+/C	20.6	79.4
C–/D	15.3	84.7
Vocational plans		
Four-year college	25.6	74.4
Graduate school	26.7	73.3

TABLE 2.
Characteristics of Teachers

Characteristic	Needed Rank	Needed % Saying Very Important	Demonstrated Rank	Demonstrated % Noting Most or All
Understanding	1	82	6	66
Knowledgeable	2	81	1	87
Fair	3	78	4	71
Interesting	4	72	9	41
Organized	5	67	5	69
Competent	6	62	3	75
Friendly	7	60	2	80
Creative	8	44	10	33
Demanding	9	22	7	62
Strict	10	10	8	44

Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.

sponse rate above 18.5% in the category "frequently."

Other items that more than half of the students cited as more than rare occurrences were: "Teachers waste too much time on things that are not important" (frequently, 13.5%; sometimes, 40.5%); "Teachers show bias in assigning grades" (frequently, 11.5%; sometimes, 44.8%); "Teachers give homework that is too long or difficult to complete on time" (frequently, 11.7%; sometimes, 44.7%); "Teachers seem to teach mainly for the benefit of top students" (frequently, 11.6%; sometimes, 38.9%); "Teachers do not use effective teaching methods" (frequently, 8.2%; sometimes, 46.7%).

Even taking into account the ease with which a respondent could check "sometimes" (almost everything happens sometimes), less than half of the students checked the following problems as occurring in their schools: "Teachers do not appear to care whether students learn the subject or not." "Teachers do not know the subject well enough to teach it effectively." Despite persistent criticisms of the subject-matter background of teachers, 72% of these high school seniors said that lack of knowledge of the subject being taught never or rarely interfered with effective teaching in their schools.

There were a few significant differences in reactions to teacher behaviors by subgroups of respondents. Students in private schools viewed their teachers more favorably, as might have been anticipated from the higher grades they assigned to teachers. A substantially larger proportion of public school students indicated concern that their teachers 1) taught mainly for the benefit of top students, 2) wasted time, and 3) did not appear to care whether or not students learned the subject. Gender had no statistically significant effect on student responses to teacher behaviors. Nonwhite students were concerned about teachers teaching mainly for the benefit of top students. In two categories, the average grade of the students reflected special student concerns. The lower the average grade, the more likely that the student felt that teachers are uninterested in whether students learn and that they concentrate on the top students.

Table 3 illustrates the nagging problem of alienation among students who have not performed well in school but have nonetheless remained in school through the senior year. Many of their peers, who would have shared their concern on these issues, have already dropped out at earlier grades.

Students do not give teachers low ratings on their knowledge of content or on their level of competence.

TABLE 3.
Teachers' Perceived Favoritism

Item	Students Responding "Frequently" (%) A/A–	B+/B/B–	C+/C	C–/D
Teachers seem to teach mainly for the benefit of top students.	7.4	11.2	13.7	21.7
Teachers do not appear to care whether all students learn the subject or not.	6.7	10.7	14.6	21.7

SCHOOLS

Grading schools. High school seniors believe that the public schools in the U.S. are in trouble. Only about one in 20 (5.7%) would give them a grade of A. Less than 1% of nonpublic school students would assign the public schools an A. Nearly 20% of nonpublic school seniors and 10% of public school seniors would give public schools grades of D or F. The median grade that the students would award to the public schools is C.

On the other hand, most students give the school they attend a good grade (see Table 4). Fewer than one in 20 rate their school below average. One-quarter of all students think that their school deserves an A. Three-quarters would grade their own school A or B.

When it comes to assessing schools,

TABLE 4.
How High School Seniors Rate Schools

Grade	Your Own School			Public Schools in Community			Public Schools in Nation		
	All %	Public %	Non-Public %	All %	Public %	Non-Public %	All %	Public %	Non-Public %
A	24.1	22.2	42.6	8.2	8.7	3.3	5.7	6.3	0.7
B	48.1	48.5	43.9	44.3	45.9	28.9	35.3	36.2	26.3
C	23.8	25.0	11.6	38.8	39.0	37.5	48.8	48.2	53.9
D	3.4	3.5	1.9	7.6	5.8	25.7	9.5	8.8	17.1
F	0.7	0.8	0.0	1.0	0.7	4.6	0.7	0.5	2.0

lack of familiarity breeds contempt. As Table 4 shows, high school seniors believe that the trouble with public education is elsewhere. High school seniors think that the quality of their own schools is high, but they doubt the quality of public secondary schools in general. Ratings of schools decline precipitously when students are asked to rate schools in the community as a whole rather than the school they attend, and the ratings continue to decline when students are asked to render an opinion about the nation's schools. (This same phenomenon has appeared in ratings of schools by parents in Gallup Polls of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools.)

A disturbing feature in these data is the reaction of seniors in nonpublic schools. They hold quite strong negative feelings about public schools and react even less favorably to public schools about which one would assume they know something (i.e., schools in their own communities) than toward schools in the nation as a whole.

Students with higher average grades rated their schools distinctly higher than did students with lower grade-point averages. For example, A students were 2½ times more likely to give their schools an A than were C students. Seniors in academic tracks rated their schools higher than did seniors in vocational or technical tracks. Students in the highest socioeconomic category were more likely to give their schools an A (28%) than were students in the lowest socioeconomic category (21%), and those in the highest socioeconomic category were also less likely (3.3% to 5.3%) to give their schools a grade of D or F. As was the case with their ratings of teachers, students who need more

TABLE 5.
How High School Seniors Feel About Their School

	I do not like my school at all.				I like my school very much.
	0 %	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %
All students	1.8	7.3	27.1	44.9	18.9
Public school students	1.9	7.7	26.2	46.0	18.2
Nonpublic school students	0.6	3.2	25.8	44.5	25.8
Average grade of students					
A/A–	1.4	3.9	18.1	47.2	29.4
B+/B/B–	1.5	6.9	24.7	48.7	18.1
C+/C	2.2	9.4	33.3	39.8	15.2
C–/D	6.7	5.0	36.7	38.3	13.3

TABLE 6.
Reactions of High School Seniors to School Policies and Practices

Item	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Neither %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
My school provides enough opportunities for student discussion of school problems.	21.1	35.3	14.7	24.6	4.3
Students in my school are given enough responsibility for judging the behavior of fellow students and assessing penalties for misconduct.	14.4	36.9	23.6	22.7	2.3
Students in my school are given enough responsibility in establishing rules of conduct.	10.0	28.9	19.4	38.2	3.5
My school does not place enough emphasis on such traditional academic subjects as English, history, math, and science.	30.3	49.1	12.4	6.1	2.0
My school does not place enough emphasis on developing students' ability to think.	11.2	34.1	21.5	24.4	8.9
My school does not place enough emphasis on training in character and citizenship.	8.1	25.3	30.5	28.7	7.4
Students in my school are not required to work hard enough in their classes.	11.4	44.7	21.7	19.1	3.2
Teachers in my school assign too little homework.	20.2	46.8	24.1	7.7	1.1
My school provides enough help to students with academic problems.	6.2	15.6	20.9	45.9	11.4
My school provides enough help to students with personal problems.	13.5	23.2	23.9	32.1	7.4
There is not enough cooperation between school authorities and parents of students at my school.	7.3	26.6	33.6	22.8	9.8

support from school may also have more difficulty obtaining it, since they are less well disposed toward the institution. However, even among students in the lowest socioeconomic category and among students with the lowest grades in their coursework, 60% to 65% gave their own schools an A or a B.

Liking school. High school seniors like school. Table 5 displays their responses to the question, "How do you feel about the school where you are now enrolled?"

Two-thirds of the students chose a positive response; 9.1% responded negatively. Students attending nonpublic schools were again more favorably inclined toward their schools. The most striking finding from this question becomes apparent when we look at the distribution of responses from students with different average grades. Students with higher average grades are much more inclined to like school. This self-rating of performance is not simply a surrogate measure of socioeconomic status. In this population of respondents, socioeconomic status was not correlated with liking school at a statistically significant level.

Although the overall picture is positive – that is, most students like their schools – significant numbers of seniors do not like school. Moreover, liking school is strongly related to success in school even among high school seniors, a group that does not include those young people who have already dropped out. The subculture of failure in the schools is a continuing problem for students and school personnel alike.

POLICIES, PRACTICES, PROBLEMS

School policies and practices. High school seniors disagree with school authorities about the way in which they are involved in solving school problems, especially discipline problems (see Table 6). A majority of the students said 1) that they are not provided with enough opportunities to discuss school problems and 2) that they are not given enough responsibility for judging the behavior of fellow students and assessing penalties for misconduct.

High school seniors were split almost 50/50 on the question of whether students are given enough responsibility in establishing rules of conduct. Student reaction to these practices is especially important because the most irritating problem noted by students from a set of often-cited school problems was, "Some students' behavior is so disruptive that many who want to learn cannot." When students were presented with an opportunity to provide free responses to a list of problems, they mentioned discipline problems most frequently. Students are concerned about discipline and student behavior, and they think they can help do something about it. The majority of high school seniors do not feel that their problem-solving abilities are being tapped.

Many practices cited by others as problems for teachers or students were viewed as relatively unimportant by these respondents (see Tables 6 and 7). Three-fourths of the high school seniors surveyed indicated that classes are rarely interrupted by announcements over the public address system. The majority indicated that classes are not too large for teachers to handle them effectively, and they did not feel that the presence of slow students interferes with overall class progress. The students also reported that their schools place sufficient emphasis on such traditional subjects as English, history, math, and science.

Seniors attending public schools equivocated on the questions of whether the schools place sufficient emphasis on developing students' ability to think or on character and citizenship education. About one-third viewed these areas as problems; an almost equal number discounted them; the remainder neither agreed nor disagreed. Students in nonpublic schools were satisfied with the emphases on both counts. Seniors in both public and nonpublic schools reported that students are required to work hard enough in their classes and that the homework assigned is sufficient. A substantial majority felt that the school provides enough help with academic problems, but the respondents split evenly on the question of the adequacy of the help that schools provide with personal problems. Responses were similarly divided on the matter of whether cooperation between school authorities and parents is sufficient.

Students with higher average grades rated their schools distinctly higher than did students with lower grades.

This picture of American high schools is different from the one that is often presented in the media. The respondents in this survey were undoubtedly better-than-average students; hence they might be expected to be critical of slovenliness in school practice. But they viewed their schools as:

- work-oriented in the classroom,
- requiring sufficient out-of-class homework assignments,
- emphasizing traditional academic subjects,
- including character and citizenship education, and

TABLE 7.
Reactions of High School Seniors to Selected Conditions in Their Schools

Item	Never %	Rarely %	Sometimes %	Frequently %
Classes are too large for teachers to handle them effectively.	15.0	38.1	37.1	9.9
Classes are interrupted by frequent public address announcements.	18.7	54.7	18.7	7.8
The presence of many slow students keeps classes from progressing satisfactorily.	16.9	49.1	29.6	4.4

Students Working

IF HIGH SCHOOL seniors often feel that they are asked to do too much homework – and 68% of them say that they feel that way – one reason may be their time-consuming jobs outside the home.

A startling seven in 10 seniors hold paid jobs, according to the 1986 Phi Delta Kappa-Indiana University study. Most commonly, they earn $50 a week or more. (The top 2% claimed earnings ranging from $200 to $800 per week.)

The more hours that students work, the lower the school grades they report. But this relationship is not necessarily causal. Youngsters from poorer families tend to receive lower grades than the scions of the rich, jobs or no jobs. But no one is likely to contend that frying Big Macs improves proficiency in American history or advanced algebra.

Something over 30% of the 1986 seniors also reported working at unpaid jobs outside the home. But the hours devoted to such jobs were modest, averaging between five and 10 per week.

Slightly less than half of the seniors received money allowances from their families. One-fourth of them received between $1 and $10 per week, 17% between $11 and $25.

All these data, along with other findings of the PDK-IU study, remind us that school is not the first concern of a host of 17- and 18-year-olds. Their other interests – ranging from cars, clothes, and televiewing to record playing and a multitude of social activities – consume big chunks of time, energy, and money.

In short, educators face enormous competition for the attention of young people, and this competition appears to be mounting.

– Stanley M. Elam, Coordinator
Phi Delta Kappa Polls

• providing adequate academic counseling.

High schools range from the chaotic to the scholarly; they should not all be swept up in generalizations about either extreme. But at the very least, in considering high school reform, one should listen to the voices of those most immediately involved.

Two statistically significant differences in responses to items in this category emerged when the socioeconomic status of the students was taken into account. Students in schools from areas with low socioeconomic status agreed more frequently that there is not enough cooperation between school authorities and parents at their school, and they were more likely to feel that their school does not provide enough help to students with academic problems.

School problem inventory. The seniors were asked to list any problem in their high school that they believed to be serious. High school seniors bring a sense of immediacy to their views of school problems. Although they are not unconcerned about academic problems, the behavioral problems that they face every day trouble them more. Table 8 summarizes their responses.

Discipline dominated the responses. Almost half of the seniors (43.5%) mentioned student behavior violations. But nearly as many (35.2%) noted that efforts to deal with these problems had become a problem in their own right. Under the heading of efforts to handle discipline, 17.2% of the students reported that their schools have too many rules (the second most frequently mentioned individual item). However, an almost equal percentage (18.1%) said that the problem is too few rules, rules that are inconsistent, or a particular obnoxious rule.

The school environment of most high school students is directly affected by problems of student behavior and substance abuse.

The second most frequently cited category of school problems was substance abuse, mentioned by 37.2% of the respondents. The single problem cited most frequently came under this heading: drug abuse, mentioned by 19.2% of the respondents; in addition, 10% of the seniors surveyed mentioned alcohol abuse.

One thing is certain. The school environment of most high school students is directly affected by problems of student behavior and substance abuse. Students are deeply concerned about these problems, and they are unpersuaded that current solutions are ameliorating the situation.

But the dominance of the drug and discipline issues should not be allowed to obscure other problems mentioned by the students.

• Racial problems were mentioned by 8% of the respondents.

• Despite the good grades given to teachers, 13% of the respondents noted serious teacher/pupil problems, such as unfair or uncaring teachers.

TABLE 8.
Serious School Problems Identified By High School Seniors

Rank	Problem	% Reporting
1	Discipline	43.5
2	Substance abuse (drugs, alcohol, tobacco)	37.2
3	Efforts to handle discipline	35.2
4	Facilities	15.2
5	Relationships with teachers	13.4
6	Curricular problems	12.8

Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.

• A relatively large number of respondents mentioned crowded or inadequate facilities.

• The most frequently mentioned curricular problem was a too-narrow set of course offerings or the absence of a desired course of study.

In this survey, high school seniors offered some good news about the American high school. They rated their teachers highly. They had an interest in becoming teachers. They liked school and rated their own schools above average. They were disturbed about behavior and drug problems, but they thought they could help in solving these problems.

How do these responses fit into the picture of the troubled American high school presented by such critics as Theodore Sizer and Patrick Welsh? First, the respondents in this survey were survivors of the system. The students for whom the high school fails most dramatically do not stay around long enough to become seniors. Second, in this survey both the schools and the respondents themselves were volunteers. As I noted earlier, the respondents are not representative of all groups of high school seniors in the U.S. Schools and students in trouble were underrepresented in this sample.

Finally, this was an opinion poll, and modal responses are always overemphasized. While most of these seniors rated their teachers A or B, 5% of them rated their teachers as failures, i.e., D or F. Consistently, students with lower self-reported average grades and students with fewer out-of-school learning resources (i.e., lower socioeconomic status) noted greater dissatisfaction with teachers, schools, policies, and practices.

Current in-depth case studies have dramatically portrayed some of the gravest shortcomings of the American high school. There is solace to be taken from the fact that last year's high school graduates had some positive responses to their schools and teachers. This fact denies neither the problems of the high school as an organization nor the self-evident fact that it fails to reach far too many students. However, organizational reform needs to be rooted in an organization's positive achievements. The American high school has some strong foundations on which reform can be built. At least, its clients think so.

1. The study was designed and executed by Stanley Elam, editor emeritus of the *Phi Delta Kappan*, and Jon Masland, co-director of the Center for Survey Research (CSR). Elam had initial help from N. L. Gage, Jack Frymier, Jerome Kopp, and Larry Barber. Terry F. White succeeded Masland as CSR co-director during the period of the study. She conducted the data analysis and prepared the technical report on the study.

2. The sampling design for the study guaranteed diversity but not representativeness. The primary sampling unit was the school, and participation by the school was voluntary. The voluntary participation rate of the national sample of schools was 56%. The school response rate from among the volunteers was 75%. The response rate of students was 70% (1,712 of 2,442). Nonrespondents were not followed up. The end result was predictable. In comparison to National Opinion Research Center (NORC) data on national occupational groups in 1983-84-85, the student self-report on father's occupation in this study overrepresented professional occupations (i.e., 21.7% in this study; 16.5% in the NORC study). The clerical and skilled trades and service occupations are underrepresented in this study by about 5%. Blacks are underrepresented – 9.6% of the respondents were black. Poor children are underrepresented.

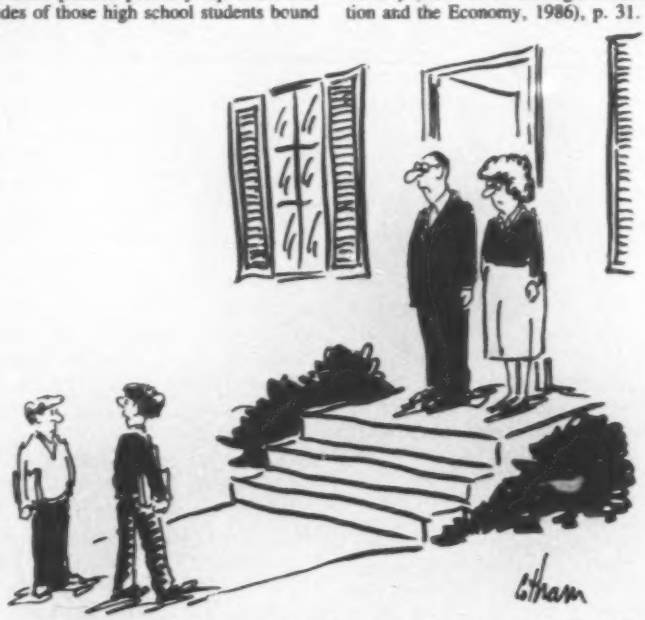
To compensate for the sampling bias, each item response was examined for differences by race, gender, school grades, and socioeconomic status. Where such differences existed, they are noted. However, even this correction does not eliminate the problem. High school students in trouble, personally or academically, would almost certainly be represented less frequently in the respondent group, and the more extreme responses of this subgroup may not be represented at all. On individual items, this poll inevitably represents young persons predisposed to give a positive response. Readers should keep in mind that this is a skewed sample of survivors (i.e., seniors) of the high school experience. The average or modal response to each question probably represents best the attitudes of those high school students bound for college or for a technical school. More successful students are overrepresented; less successful students are underrepresented.

3. One hundred fifty-seven of the 1,712 respondents (9.2%) attended private schools.

4. The students were divided into four groups according to socioeconomic status (measured by father's occupation, home ownership, and level of father's education). These data were all obtained directly from the respondents, not from their parents. The categories ranged from highest (professionals and managers who own their own homes and have education beyond high school) to lowest (laborers with less than a high school education or unemployed). Roughly 40% of the study population fell into groups 1 and 3 (highest and lower-middle), and 10% each fell into groups 2 and 4 (upper-middle and lowest). One hundred cases were not classifiable because of incomplete data.

5. Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (New York: Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986), p. 31. K

The students for whom the high school fails most dramatically do not stay around long enough to become seniors.



"Bringing home a report card is always a moment of high drama."

An Overview of Home Instruction

The world of home-schooling today is relatively small, but vigorous and diverse, says Ms. Lines. Continued growth of this movement seems likely, but at a slower rate than in recent years.

BY PATRICIA M. LINES

TENS OF thousands – perhaps hundreds of thousands – of children are meeting state compulsory education requirements at home rather than in school. Once the mainstay of education on the American frontier, home instruction is now regarded as not quite legitimate by some educators. Most often, though, these critics do not have a good general picture of home-schooling. Some may be basing their views on sketchy information or on one or two worst cases involving poor programs or even child abuse.

In this article, I will try to fill in this knowledge gap by providing an overview of this do-it-yourself practice, including a look at numbers, curricula, and some testing data. I will also briefly review official responses, paying special attention to constitutional limits on state regulation. Finally, I will offer some suggestions about how public educators and home-schoolers can end the hostility that too often characterizes their relationship.

THE WORLD OF HOME-SCHOOLING

The world of home-schooling today is small, but vigorous and diverse. Home-schoolers appear to share at least one thing: the firm belief that parents can and should be deeply involved in the education and development of their own children. Otherwise, reasons for undertaking home-schooling are as varied as the families and children involved.

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Some parents object to the political or cultural values they find in public and private schools. Others do not like the instructional methods. Many agree with the late John Holt that children learn best in an unstructured environment in which the child sets the pace and direction. Many parents wish to spend extended time with their young children before enrolling them in school. Sometimes, recognizing the needs of a precocious child, a family decides that only a highly individualized program will permit that child to attain his or her highest potential. Still other parents want to give special attention to a child who is having trouble adapting to school for any of a variety of reasons.

In the words of the women who operate Learning at Home (a home-schooling support organization located in Honaunau, Hawaii), some parents choose home instruction because they are "committed to providing a more informal, individualized, and responsive style of learning. . . . These parents often birth their children at home, clothe them in natural fibers, feed them natural foods." Many parents undertake home-schooling as a matter of long-standing religious tradition: Mormons who operate "kitchen schools" for a few neighborhood children aged 5 to 7; Seventh-Day Adventists, many of whom believe that younger children should remain at home; the Amish, who often remove their children from school after grade 8. Today, however, the largest growth in home-schooling appears to be among devout Christian parents who are unhappy with the secular nature of the public schools and have not found a suitable religious school.

The actual number of children in home instruction seems to have grown from about 15,000 in the early Seventies to well over 120,000 today – perhaps as many as 260,000. (These numbers may seem high, but they represent less than 1% of the total school-age population.) These estimates are based on reports from organizations that supply curricular materials and support and are supplemented by interviews[1] and questionnaires that provide some measure of the numbers of parents who do not rely on such organizations.

In the early Seventies, only a handful of educational institutions enrolled children in a home curriculum or provided curriculum packages designed for parents teaching their children at home. These included the Calvert School, Home Study International, the International Institute, and the state of Alaska. Between 5,000 and 6,000 children in

grades K through 8 were estimated to be enrolled in or receiving curricular materials from these organizations. Based on interviews with those familiar with the movement and on two questionnaires described in Table 1, it appears that 50% to 75% of all parents engaged in home-schooling today design their own curricula rather than use the services or materials from these institutions. Assuming that this was also true in the early Seventies, between 10,000 and 15,000 children were probably being schooled at home during that period.

Table 1, which focuses on the 1985-86 K-8 population,[2] shows that the original four organizations now serve about 7,500 children (K-8). Some of the newcomers serve only a handful of children, but growth in the distribution of Christian-based curricular packages has been extraordinary. The organizations listed in Table 1 claim almost 50,000 children in grades K-8. If 50% to 75% of home-schoolers are designing their own curricula, they account for between 50,000 and 150,000 additional children. Finally, it appears that another 20% to 30% of home-schooled children are in grades 9-12,[3] bringing the total number of school-aged children being instructed at home to anywhere from 120,000 to 260,000.[4]

Has this growth peaked? It seems likely that more efficient printing and the cheapness of electronic media will make further expansion even easier. Recent changes in state laws have made home instruction simpler from a legal standpoint.

However, other powerful factors militate against much additional growth. First, not all parents are willing to make this kind of commitment. Even those parents who prefer to allow their children to remain largely self-directed usually find it necessary to forgo employment and other major activities throughout the duration of home instruction. Marie Della Bella, who has collected data on home instruction for Connecticut since 1983, has observed that only about half of the families registered with the state continue home instruction for more than one year. An administrator with Accelerated Christian Education agrees. A second powerful factor that works against the continued expansion of home-schooling is the increasing availability of Christian schools, which are likely to attract some of the parents who might otherwise turn to home-schooling. Finally, more parents of young children are entering the workforce. On balance, then, the home-schooling movement appears as a tiny countervailing trend, and it seems likely that it will continue to grow – but at a slower rate.

A closer look at these home programs reveals an astonishing variety of educational approaches and philosophies and an equally wide variety of characteristics of the families that use them. Systematically collected data are rare, but some do exist. For example, in 1984-85 the state of Washington conducted an experimental home-schooling program (at a time when home-schooling was officially illegal in that state). The state offered to recognize a home-school as a legal school if it was supervised by a certified teacher. (State law required private school teachers to be certified or, in exceptional cases, to be supervised by a certified teacher.) In this way the state was able to identify 500 home-schooled students.

Based on questionnaires received from 313 "parent/tutors" teaching these 500 children, the state found that 89% of the parent/tutors were female; 74%

Illustration by Dave Cutler

were Caucasian; 14% were Hispanic; and a few were native American (five parents), black (four parents), or Asian (one parent). Eighty-five percent of the parents reported incomes below $30,000. Four parents reported only a grade school education; 19 reported some high school. Almost one-fourth held a high school diploma; a few more had General Equivalency Diplomas; 41% reported some college; 16% held bachelor's degrees; 4% held graduate degrees.

Most of the parent/tutors (89%) had three or fewer children. Almost all the parents (95.8%) taught only their own children. Eight families reported four or more children in the home-school. Three of the parents said that they schooled children in addition to their own; five said that they tutored other children with assistance from the parents of those youngsters; nine said that neighborhood children sometimes joined them on projects. A majority (56%) estimated that they spent from 20 to 30 hours per week in directed activities with their children; 24% spent more than 30 hours; 13% spent between 15 and 20 hours; a few (6%) spent less than 15 hours.

My own more limited interviews suggest that some parents – many of them former teachers – think through their methods very carefully to meet the individual needs of their children. Others have less training, but they usually make an effort to discover an appropriate pedagogical approach for their children, sometimes consulting teachers, experts, or materials on child development and learning. Some families use a very traditional approach, including schedules and lesson plans that look exactly like those used in large-group instruction. Other families abjure structure and strongly believe in allowing the children to set the pace and direction of home learning. Some families move from structured to unstructured programs as the children become more self-directed. Many families try to arrange for some activities with other children and in the larger community. One home-school, for example, makes regular trips to a home for the aged, where the children read to the residents and help them in a variety of ways.

Examining the curricular packages in use in home-schools provides another perspective on the world of home-schooling. These materials reinforce the conclusion that home-schools follow no standard pattern. The materials of the School of Home Learning, in Escondido, California, display the motto, "Question authority." One small California group relies almost exclusively on the *World Book Encyclopedia*, supplemented by activities and projects.

The Calvert School, oldest of the organizations enrolling home-schooled children (it was begun experimentally in 1906 and officially in 1908), uses the same materials in its home program as on its Baltimore campus. These materials are based on those developed by the school's first headmaster, Virgil Hillyer, who adhered to such "radical" (for his day) ideas as teaching reading before teaching the alphabet and learning without textbooks. Calvert now uses a comprehensive set of workbooks, supplemented with other readings, including a healthy dose of the classics. The materials may be purchased for use with or without the services of a correspondent teacher.

TABLE 1.
Number of K-8 Children in Home Instruction (1985-86)

Provider	N
Abbott Loop Christian Center, Anchorage, Alas.	67
Accelerated Christian Education, Lewisville, Tex.	3,600*
Alpha Omega Publications, Tempe, Ariz.	2,700
American Christian Academy, Colleyville, Tex.	700
American Heritage Christian Academy, Sacramento, Calif.	150
Baldwin Park Christian School, Baldwin Park, Calif.	75
Calvert School, Baltimore, Md.	4,168
Christian Liberty Academy, Arlington Heights, Ill.	21,000
Clonlara School, Ann Arbor, Mich.	1,560
Discovery Christian School, Concord, Calif.	240
Evangelistic & Faith Enterprises of America, Inc., Oliver Springs, Tenn.	300
Family Centered Learning Alternatives, Arlington, Wash.	150
Hewitt-Moore Child Development Center, Washougal, Wash.	4,000
Home Study International, Takoma Park, Md.	1,509
International Institute, Park Ridge, Ill.	1,000
Learning at Home, Honaunau, Hi.	800
Our Lady of Victory, Mission Hills, Calif.	600
National Academy of Christian Education, Columbus, O.	1,050
Pensacola Christian School, Pensacola, Fla.	1,870
Pilgrim Schools, Porterville and three other sites in Calif.	200
Pilgrim Christian School, Maywood, Calif.	80
Santa Fe Community School, Santa Fe, N.M.	200
School of Home Learning, Escondido, Calif.	80
Seton School Home Study, Front Royal, Va.	500
Summit Christian Academy, Dallas, Tex.	1,800
Sycamore Tree, Costa Mesa, Calif.	175
State Department of Education, Juneau, Alas.	800
15 organizations with fewer than 50 children in 1985-86	123
Subtotal	49,497
Estimate of number whose parents prepare own curriculum**	50,000-150,000
	100,000-200,000

Figures include children enrolled in a school but remaining at home (often they correspond with a teacher) or receiving relatively complete curricular materials, support, or services. Organizations were located through a mailing list compiled by Holt Associates (December 1985), supplemented by my own research. Of 72 organizations identified, six were publishers serving both schools and home-schools (home purchasers only are accounted for in the table); three provided no data on numbers of children in their home-school programs; one had decided not to offer a home program; six were secondary or postsecondary only; 14 did not answer a letter and had no telephone listing (and presumably do not serve large numbers of home-schoolers).

*Of these, 1,800 are enrolled, and 1,800 represent a rough estimate. ACE distributes 225,000 K-8 packets (54 are required for a full year) annually but has no record of how many go to home addresses. ACE also supplies "tutorial centers" (six or more children, two or more families), which are not included here.

**In a Washington poll of 100 teachers supervising home-instruction programs, 41% said parent/tutors "usually/always" selected curricular materials from a publisher, and 47% said they "never/sometimes" did so. The Home-School Legal Defense Association randomly sampled 300 of its membership files (about 3,000 total) and found that 72.33% of its members said they planned their own curriculum and that 27.67% said they used a correspondence program.

Alaska originally modeled its program after Calvert's, but it has since added some significant modifications. The correspondence teachers, based in Juneau, visit their students in person from time to time and are in frequent contact by telephone. (Alaska has a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to provide technical assistance to public or private institutions that wish to replicate its program.) Family Centered Learning Alternatives, in the state of Washington, also maintains personal contact with the children; a certified teacher assists in designing an individual program for each child, meets with each family at least weekly, advises parents on their role as primary tutors, and helps arrange group activities for children from several families. Some organizations, such as the Clonlara School, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Learning at Home, in Honaunau, Hawaii, help parents develop an individualized curriculum using materials they develop, as well as texts and workbooks from commercial publishers. The Hewitt-Moore Child Development Center and the Evangelistic & Faith Enterprises of America both provide special assistance to families with learning-disabled children.

The largest of the religiously based organizations appears to be Christian Liberty Academy, which provides home-schoolers with an individualized package of textbooks and workbooks. Academy officials initially used older textbooks, the McGuffey Readers, and packets of material from Accelerated Christian Education (ACE). They no longer use ACE materials, and they now draw on a wider range of suppliers, including A Beka Publications (affiliated with Pensacola Christian College), Bob Jones University Press, and Rod and Staff Publishers (a Mennonite group). Most of their families send tests and other materials to Christian Liberty Academy for evaluation and grading. Teachers and other professionals are employed for this task.

The materials from ACE guide children through a sequential home-study curriculum that relies heavily on Biblical passages, moral homilies, and similar religious texts. The materials consistently show two-parent families and traditional sex roles for individuals. Minority families are shown in much the same way as majority families. The current criticism of the ACE materials appears to focus mostly on the anti-Communist and authoritarian approach of the history and social studies packets.

One of the newcomers – the Pensacola Christian School – has pioneered the concept of video schools. It enrolls 70 students nationwide and provides televised classes, along with other services. Most home-schoolers regard television as of limited usefulness, however.

Perhaps the most important assessments of home-schooling focus on the ultimate academic success or failure of the children. While some home-schooled children probably suffer from negligent or incompetent parent/tutors, others flourish. A recent example is the admission to Harvard University in 1984 of a young man who had been taught entirely at home. His brother was also admitted to Harvard in 1986. In February 1986 a Florida youngster who had been schooled at home through sixth grade walked off with top individual honors in a Mathcounts competition.

Such cases are merely anecdotal, of course. But scattered testing data suggest that successes are more numerous than failures in home-schools. Alaska, which has tested home-schooled children for years, finds them performing above average on nationally standardized tests.

One study of children in a home tutorial network in Los Angeles showed that the children scored higher on standardized tests than did their peers in Los Angeles public schools. In the experimental state program in Washington described above, the state tested 100 children (all of those who remained in the program from spring 1984 to spring 1985). Although the sample was too small to permit generalization, a majority of the students were at or above average on the Stanford Achievement Test. Information on income and parental education from the survey of parents indicates that this was not an elite group.

More testing data may be available soon. Testing is required in Connecticut (at the option of the local district), Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia (at the option of the local district), Washington, and West Virginia. However, some of these states, such as Kentucky and Oregon, rely on local districts to test and process data; the state itself does not collect the data. In Arizona, the tests may be scored at the state level, but not every district uses that service, and the state does not require its scoring contractors to aggregate data.

The evidence for the social development of home-schooled children is even scarcer. What exists suggests superior development. John Wesley Taylor of Andrews University tested 224 home-schooled children (randomly drawn from a list of 45,000 addresses supplied by Holt Associates and the Hewitt-Moore Child Development Center). Using the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, he found that half of the home-schooled children in his sample scored at or above the 91st percentile. His sample may be biased, and testing procedures may have influenced the outcome.

One might also look for activities that educators believe enhance social development. If group activity is the basis for such development, home-schools can provide it. There is evidence that most home-schooled children engage in frequent group and community activity.

Of course, high test scores provide no evidence that all children would benefit from the experience of home instruction. Della Bella reports that 90% of Connecticut children who begin a program of home instruction are already at or above grade level. The test data are evidence only that, in general, children in home-schools are having successful experiences.

HOME-SCHOOLING AND THE LAW

States regulate home instruction through compulsory education laws –

"Whoever said there's safety in numbers didn't get the numbers I do."

laws designed approximately a century ago to address the problem of truancy. Often these are criminal laws. Until recently, several states did not recognize home instruction as a way of satisfying such laws, and in these states parents were prosecuted and sometimes jailed because they taught their children at home. By the end of 1986, however, every state permitted home instruction in some form. Only a few strictly regulate it: Iowa, Michigan, and North Dakota require teachers in home-schools to be certified.

Different branches of state government have taken the initiative where home-schooling is concerned, often after litigation or intense lobbying efforts. Twenty-nine state statutes now explicitly allow instruction at home by a parent or tutor. Missouri adopted a new law in 1986; Arkansas, New Mexico, Tennessee, Washington, and Wyoming in 1985; Georgia and Virginia in 1984; and Wisconsin, West Virginia, Mississippi, Arizona, and Montana in 1983. In addition, several states have liberalized their laws. For example, in 1985 Florida repealed a requirement that children taught at home be taught only by state-certified teachers.

Statutes in another 12 states (Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, and South Carolina) and the District of Columbia mandate that children be educated (without specifying where) or require *either* school attendance *or* some nonschool alternative, such as "equivalent instruction." Courts in Maryland and Indiana have recently held that such language authorizes home instruction.

Nine states require school attendance, with no exceptions. However, Illinois and North Carolina recognize home instruction by virtue of court decisions determining that the requirement of "school" attendance is satisfied by attendance at a "home-school." Michigan's attorney general and state boards of education in Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and New Hampshire have also decided that the home can be a school. The state board of education in Texas – the last holdout – adopted optional guidelines last summer as part of a failed effort to settle a lawsuit. California, with a statute permitting home-schooling by a certified tutor, has also permitted the practice as a local district option by authorizing "independent study" through public schools or through the acceptance of home-schools as private schools.

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Although state policy has consistently moved in the direction of more relaxed regulation, the response of the courts to home-schooling has varied considerably. In the past few years, courts in Alabama, North Carolina, North Dakota, and West Virginia have upheld state requirements that greatly restrict or effectively prohibit home-schooling. State supreme courts in Arkansas and Kansas ruled that compulsory attendance laws required school attendance, and they refused to find that home-schooling could satisfy that requirement. (In all these states, the legislatures responded by recognizing home-schooling in some way, though the degree of regulation varies.)

By contrast, several other courts have struck down compulsory education laws because they were too vague or overbroad. The chief problem was the failure of the laws to define "school" or "equivalent instruction." Courts generally do not favor laws that might give administrators authority to regulate free speech or other innocent activities. Such legislation might discourage cautious people from exercising their First Amendment rights and at the same time fail to put individuals on notice of what is prohibited. Thus courts in Georgia, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Missouri have thrown out all or part of those states' compulsory education laws. All but two of these states have since passed new laws that specifically permit home instruction. Iowa has not acted, and Minnesota has a new law authorizing a study of the issue.

Faced with similar definitional problems, the Illinois Supreme Court decided that the home can be a "school" and thus made home instruction legal in that state. The North Carolina Supreme Court recently took the same view. A federal court in Indiana held in 1986 that "equivalent instruction" included home instruction.

Although the U.S. Supreme Court has never reviewed the right to home-schooling, cases involving the free exercise of speech and religion and a handful of related school cases suggest that constitutional interests are at stake. Generally, when a First Amendment interest can be found, the Court weighs the interest of the state against an individual family's freedom to determine a child's education. The Supreme Court decision in *Wisconsin* v. *Yoder* – which found that compulsory attendance requirements for children after grade 8 violate the First Amendment rights of the Amish – is, in many ways, a home-schooling case.

Although the Court ruled narrowly in *Yoder*, prior decisions dealing with conscientious objectors to military service indicate a willingness to extend freedom of religion to those motivated not by religion but by conscience. Many legal scholars now believe that the family's interest should prevail in the matter of home-schooling and that the state's interest can be met in other ways. The American Civil Liberties Union summarizes its policy on this matter:

> [I]n the interest of parental right to choose an alternative to public education, [home instruction with safeguards, such as approval of curriculum or testing of the child] . . . should be extended to all jurisdictions because the state's interest in assuring minimum levels of education does not extend to control of the means by which that interest is realized.

A new wave of cases – testing not whether home-schooling should be permitted but the extent to which states may regulate it – may be on the horizon. The teacher certification requirement is currently undergoing litigation in the three states that require it, and it seems likely that there will be future litigation regarding the authority of the state to regulate the content of the curriculum of home-schools as well. Anx-

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ious educators may wish to prescribe specific texts for children in home-schools or require submission of texts for approval, but either practice would raise serious questions about violation of the free speech rights of the individuals involved.

The Supreme Court has indicated that states have a legitimate interest in the education of children and may specify reasonable regulations governing a private school curriculum. But the Court has never extended this dictum to state control over the selection of specific materials or to state prescription of every subject to be taught. Indeed, states have not prevailed when they have intruded too far in these areas. In the Twenties the Supreme Court struck down a Nebraska law prohibiting instruction in a foreign language and a Hawaii law that excessively regulated foreign language schools, including the textbooks that they used. Regulating the content of private educational materials is simply too intrusive under the free speech clause of the First Amendment.

The Court will allow regulation of narrowly and precisely defined categories of verbal utterances, including such speech as pornography, defamation, espionage, incitement to violence, advocating the overthrow of the government, or yelling "fire" in a crowded theater. Such utterances are not regarded as speech protected under the First Amendment. However, the materials from Accelerated Christian Education, which seem to draw the most fire from educators, appear to be fully protected under the First Amendment, either as free speech or as free exercise of religion.

Even if material is classified as protected speech, states may regulate it, if there is a "compelling state interest" sufficient to outweigh First Amendment rights. Ever since Justice Hugo Black lost his battle to persuade his brethren on the Court that the right to free speech is absolute, the Court has allowed some limits to be placed on free speech in the face of overwhelming societal need. However, the state must pursue "the least drastic means" of achieving its legitimate goal. It seems unlikely that the state's interest in the education of any child is so compelling that it would justify a state-prescribed view of history, social studies, or the world. Prescribing or censoring textbooks would be a particularly ironic way to preserve democratic ideals.

In any case, the fuss over the ACE materials seems to hinge on political and cultural differences. Some public educators will easily accept home-schooling for families living abroad or in geographically isolated areas. But they grow nervous when home-schooling is motivated by politics or religious fundamentalism. In the article by Dan Fleming and Thomas Hunt that appears in this *Kappan*, the authors do not challenge the ACE materials primarily for poor grammar, errors in spelling, lack of sequential progression, or evidence that children fail to learn from these materials. Their negative judgment rests primarily on the view of the world depicted in these materials.

To be sure, the ACE curriculum materials are politically conservative, authoritarian, and Christian throughout. Public school materials tend to be progressive, secular, and almost totally silent in their treatment of religion. *Both* contain some factual errors. The Fleming and Hunt critique of the ACE materials sounds oddly familiar to anyone who has reviewed recent critiques of *public* school materials, initiated by political conservatives, such as Paul Vitz or the Heritage Foundation. Fleming and Hunt's ultimate condemnation of ACE – failure to stimulate critical thinking – is the same criticism of public school history texts offered by Frances FitzGerald in her witty and troubling book, *America Revised*. In at least one way, the ACE materials are better than many public school texts: they tackle topics from recent history that public school texts often avoid because they are controversial.[5] As FitzGerald observed, when a topic provokes too much disagreement, it fails to survive the official and unofficial reviews that leave public school texts bland, dull, and strangely silent in certain areas.

The courts will uphold reasonable state regulations, of course. Although guiding precedent from the High Court is lacking, there is little doubt that states have the right to request data from home-schools. States may also be able to set a minimum length for the instructional day and year. And many states do choose to test the children. States could probably also prescribe reasonable standards for teachers in home-schools – for example, some form of competency testing, or a high school diploma to teach young children and a college degree for older children (assuming the state had evidence that these things affect learning).

But it is not clear that states can show

". . .the household robot laughed to see such sport and the microprocessor ran away with the cellular phone."

sufficient justification for requiring teachers to be certified. Nor is it likely that states could require both testing of the children and of the teacher *as criteria for acceptance of the program*. (Public schools, after all, are not shut down if the children *or* the teachers fail to test above a minimum level.) The most flexible approach would permit several different options by which home instruction could be approved.

BUILDING COOPERATION

Much could be gained by building cooperative relationships between public school officials and home-schoolers. Better ties would facilitate answering questions about the numbers of children involved in home-schooling and could help identify the rare cases of child abuse or neglect. More important, cooperative ties could enrich our understanding of child development and learning. Much could be learned from those who provide substantially different learning environments, particularly those families pursuing a less-structured, more child-directed approach to schooling. We could study such things as the comparative effects of one-to-one versus larger student/teacher ratios; the effects of peer pressure; the effects of different contacts with adults; the relative efficiency of untrained parents and trained, certified teachers; child-directed versus teacher-directed programs; and so on.

Unfortunately, home-schoolers sometimes see public educators as crass opportunists, interested in their children only for the sake of the federal and state dollars they represent. Or worse, they see public educators as depraved characters seeking to mold other people's children in all the wrong ways. Some home-schoolers act on these conclusions and refuse to cooperate with even the most innocuous requests for information. Others carry their preference for parent-led programs so far that they refuse professional supervision, even when it is required for objectivity, as in the administration of tests.

On the other hand, some public educators seem to feel that only public schools can achieve the public's goals for education. They find home-schools even more subversive than private schools. A few state and local educators vigorously oppose home-schooling because they believe it is unsound educationally; they dismiss evidence of above-average academic achievement as incomplete. Some public educators cite isolated cases of child abuse, apparently assuming that these are typical of home-schooling and could be prevented by requiring all children to attend a recognized public or private school. Better data collection and more contact with home-schoolers should help resolve the objections of these educators.

Stated baldly, public educators face a choice: have no contact with the home-schooling movement (which would suit some home-schoolers fine) or work to build mutual trust, friendship, and respect. In addition to the constitutional difficulties discussed above, regulating the intellectual fare that parents provide for their children is difficult as a practical matter. Even in the recent past, when most states viewed home-schooling as illegal, they failed to enforce their own laws. Parents often went underground or moved to a state whose laws were more favorable. Sometimes, as happened recently in the state of Washington, prosecutors refuse to take cases against home-schoolers.

Public educators must now deal with the increased numbers and greater political sophistication of home-schoolers. Last year, well over a thousand home-schoolers and their supporters attended a key meeting of the state board of education in Texas to review proposed regulations – even though at the time the board regarded the parents' choice as illegal. Lobbying efforts before state legislatures in other states have succeeded as well.

A loose nationwide network of home-schoolers has formed, aided by the efforts of Holt Associates, Dorothy and Raymond Moore of the Hewitt-Moore Child Development Center, and other organizations that compile mailing lists of home-schoolers and supporting organizations. Some of the supporting organizations have become highly sophisticated in dealing with public officials. For example, the Home-School Legal Defense Association, which currently serves about 3,000 families (for an annual fee of $100), represents parents for no additional charge if they face legal action because of their home-schooling efforts. The organization also provides legal materials, maintains an up-to-date compilation of state policies, and will provide testimony before state legislatures.

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All of this means legal and political difficulties for states that strictly regulate home-schooling. A realistic approach for states would be to recognize home-schooling and then work to build bridges to the home-schoolers, to increase reporting, and to provide assistance when needed. Given a more favorable legal and political environment, it becomes possible to develop positive public/private educational efforts.

Responsible parties in both the public and the private sectors have recognized how hostile attitudes can undermine broader social goals, and some have taken steps to overcome this. For example, Learning at Home, a nationwide supplier of material and a support group for Hawaiian home-schoolers, distributes a two-page information sheet that walks parents through the steps required to conform to Hawaii law. Part of the advice is of the following sort:

> Please remember when you deal with school officials that, to them, you represent home-schoolers. If you approach them respectfully and with confidence . . . they will be reassured that you are going to be a responsible parent and take care of your child's education. . . . We have found that any sensible educational plan presented with *confidence* and *civility* to local principals is eventually accepted if those official procedures are followed.

Such admonitions to home-schoolers, when they are taken to heart, greatly aid the development of friendly, cooperative relationships.

The greater burden of building bridges should fall on public officials, because they are the professionals in the partnership. When large numbers of home-schooling families appear hostile, public educators might organize a series of nonthreatening meetings, held in neutral settings. Intermediaries – legislators, private school leaders, academics – might help make the initial contacts.

The first meetings should focus on topics about which agreement is possible, such as "Goals for Our Children," and no one should expect much more from these initial meetings than a willingness to communicate. (This approach has been used by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Private Education, which sponsors Koffee Klatches for public and private school officials. Charles O'Malley, director of the office, has observed that, at the first meeting, "It was Thursday, and we had coffee and doughnuts. When the meeting ended, all that we could agree on was that it was Thursday and that we had had coffee and doughnuts.") Later, as the participants become more willing to engage in discussion and as mutual understanding grows, the agenda may turn to substantive issues.

Ideally, public officials and home-schoolers can make a peace that permits cooperation on the real business at hand – educating children. At a minimum, local school officials could open such school facilities as laboratories, libraries, athletic facilities, and testing services to home-schoolers. They could also admit home-schooled children to such classes as band and choral singing, in which group instruction is essential.

Even now, a number of state and local education agencies permit, and even encourage, part-time enrollment. (The state department of education in Washington has just begun to compile data on such matters and has found that 64 of 1,509 home-schoolers requested part-time courses when they registered their programs.) Local districts can include such youngsters in their attendance reports for calculating state aid. Enterprising private schools might also consider part-time enrollment options for home-schoolers.

Individual leadership plays a key role. For example, a district superintendent in the state of Washington offered to assist parents engaged in home-schooling (at a time when state law officially forbade it) by enrolling them in school and providing support and materials for the home programs. He managed to keep well-informed on the progress of the children in these programs, he gained high credibility with the parents, and he kept his state aid.

The greater burden of building bridges should fall on public officials, because they are the professionals in the partnership.

Or take another example. Calvin Frazier, commissioner of education in Colorado, agreed to participate in a series of meetings with attorneys and legislators and through such efforts settled 10 lawsuits with home-schoolers. Not content to stop there, when he heard that some parents were truly fearful of him, he invited them to coffee. By being accessible and understanding, he overcame their reluctance to file the formal reports required by state law. (To his surprise, he discovered that all the parents wanted him to do was to agree that they had a constitutional right to engage in home instruction.) From this informal meeting, Frazier organized a state-level advisory committee on home instruction and recruited members from among the parents who had joined him for coffee.

By extending a helping hand, these public officials and others like them have been able to gather more information on home-schooling programs. More important, they are able to help their states channel the dedication and idealism of these individuals into educational efforts. The result will probably be children who are educated to be different. But such differences can ultimately stimulate the intellectual development of the nation.

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1. This and other information gathered for this article comes from informal interviews, information gathered at conferences, and correspondence over the past three years. While I have had more than 200 such contacts, the following individuals proved especially helpful: Marie Della Bella, Director, Private Education, Connecticut Department of Education; Merrill Hall, Head Master, Calvert School, Baltimore, Md.; Sylvia Hare, Abilities Research Associates, Morongo Valley, Calif.; Michael Farris and Chris Klicka, Home-School Legal Defense Association; Barbara Lawson, Windsong Life School, Anaheim, Calif.; Dick Luther, Director, Home Correspondence Division, State of Alaska; Michael J. McHugh, Christian Liberty Academy, Arlington Heights, Ill.; Barbara Mertens, Director, Private Education, Washington State Office of Public Instruction; Pat Montgomery, Head Mistress, Clonlara School, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Raymond and Dorothy Moore, Hewitt-Moore Child Development Center, Washougal, Wash.; James Pritchard, Accelerated Christian Education, Lewisville, Tex.; Steve Stephens, State Testing Coordinator, Arizona Department of Education, Phoenix; Ted Wade, Gazelle Publications, Auburn, Calif.; Arlon Widder, American Christian Schools, Colleyville, Tex.; and Darlene Wicks, Education Administrator, Centralized Correspondence Study, State of Alaska Department of Education.

2. I chose to focus on the K-8 population because high school correspondence courses reach many adults as well as school-aged children.

3. Some of the organizations listed in Table 1 serve school-aged children through 12th grade but do not ordinarily serve adults. Accelerated Christian Education believes that 40% of the users of its curriculum materials are in grades 9-12. The School of Home Learning has 22 out of 102 children at the secondary level. The Pensacola Christian School estimates that between 20% and 25% of its correspondence students are in grades 9-12. Alaska reports that 456 of its 1,254 school-aged correspondence students in 1985-86 were in grades 9-12.

4. This method of estimation was chosen because it was inexpensive, while still likely to have some validity. Many factors could distort the estimate, however. For example, I have no doubt failed to identify all sources of curricular materials and support for home-schoolers. I also suspect that two of the organizations reporting no children actually had some but were fearful of reporting it. Then, too, there is no way of telling exactly how many children use "hand-me-downs" or photocopies of curricular materials (most home-schoolers have more than one child involved in home-schooling). All in all, my estimate is probably understated, but I hope it can serve as a preliminary guide to public policy makers and to the research community.

5. This observation should not be construed as my endorsement of the ACE materials as a whole. I only wish to point out that even public educators could learn something from examining what ACE does. K